



## **2007 Annual Trafficking in Persons Report GUINEA-BISSAU (TIER 2)**

Guinea-Bissau is a source country for children trafficked for the purposes of forced begging and agricultural labor. Most victims are boys talibe trafficked to West African countries, primarily Senegal, by Koranic school instructors marabouts or their intermediaries. The eastern cities of Bafata and Gabu are key source areas and the primary route to Senegal is overland. Parents often agree to send their child with an instructor, falsely believing the child will receive a religious education. However, many instructors offer no education and instead compel children to beg in urban areas for up to 12 hours at a time. If children fail to earn about one dollar per day, they are subjected to physical abuse. Children are also sometimes forced into seasonal agricultural labor on some instructors, plantations.

The Government of Guinea-Bissau does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so, despite limited resources. To improve its response to trafficking, Guinea-Bissau should: draft and pass a law prohibiting trafficking in persons; increase efforts to prosecute traffickers; develop a national action plan to combat trafficking; and strengthen efforts to raise public awareness.

### **Prosecution**

The Government of Guinea-Bissau has demonstrated weak anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts during the last year. Guinea-Bissau does not prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons. During the year, the government detained one marabout and some intermediaries who assisted marabouts to traffic children, but failed to prosecute them under existing statutes, such as those on kidnapping and child abuse. To combat trafficking, migration officials in Pirada blocked children not accompanied by a parent from leaving the country. Effective law enforcement is hampered by faulty phone service between border police and central police headquarters, lack of vehicles for police who must travel by public bus, lack of payment of police salaries, lack of prisons, and lack of training. Traffickers who are detained by border police and successfully referred to the central police for further action are usually released. Law enforcement efforts against traffickers are also obstructed by cultural and political pressures; politicians have admitted that prosecuting religious instructors who traffic children could be misperceived by a major voting block as action against religious instruction.

### **Protection**

The Government of Guinea-Bissau made significant efforts to provide care for trafficking victims during the year. While the government does not operate victim shelters, it continued to contribute \$16,000 per year to an anti-trafficking NGO (AMIC), providing care to trafficking victims. Police and border officials continued to identify and refer victims to AMIC for care. In 2006, police and the Bissau-Guinean embassy in Senegal coordinated with NGOs and IOM to repatriate 92 Bissau-Guinean victims from Senegal and two victims from Guinea-Bissau to Guinea and Senegal respectively. Police and border officials assisted AMIC in locating the parents of repatriated victims. These child victims sometimes lived with the Gabu police commissioner until their parents could be found. Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to Senegal also housed children who were awaiting repatriation from Senegal, when no

alternative could be found. In February 2007, Bissau-Guinean immigration officials on the border with Guinea coordinated with police to rescue 29 Guinean boys. The government does not encourage victims, all of whom are children, to assist in trafficking investigations and prosecutions. Victims are not penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.

## **Prevention**

The Government of Guinea-Bissau made solid efforts to raise awareness about trafficking during the reporting period. The government helps to fund radio trafficking awareness campaigns conducted by AMIC, and Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to Senegal has delivered radio messages warning Muslim communities about trafficking. The government also assists IOM and NGOs to educate repatriated Bissau-Guinean victims and their families about trafficking to avoid re-victimization. The government lacks a national action plan to combat trafficking. Guinea-Bissau has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.